

A successful collaboration: Biopterre and the Syndicat des producteurs ovins du Bas-Saint-Laurent of the UPA



➤ Sheep Help Fertilize Plants

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Can sheep help plants grow? Absolutely, according to the Syndicat des producteurs ovins du Bas-Saint-Laurent, which has come up with a natural, biodegradable “made in Quebec” fertilizer composed primarily of sheep wool.

Given the declining textile market share of wool, which is considered a by-product of sheep meat production, various partners took inspiration from research done in France and have developed a new type of fertilizer, the first of its kind in Quebec. “The Bas-Saint-Laurent is often referred to as the sheep capital of Quebec. Given the large number of sheep in the region, we’ve been working to develop a Quebec-made product,” says Gaston Pepin, Regional Director of the Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA), which represents the 2,500 producers in the Bas-Saint-Laurent area.

“Wool can be a good source of plant nutrition so we thought it would be feasible to process it for use in the horticultural sector,” adds Éric Dion of **Biopterre**, leader of the team mandated to handle the scientific aspect of the project.



➤ A slow-release fertilizer

Biopterre’s Bioproducts Development Center has been designing a variety of fertilizer formulas since 2009. Raw wool is ground up and strained before being combined with other ingredients. The mixture is then mechanically processed into small pellets with a granulating machine.

The resulting fertilizer gradually releases nutrients into the soil so plants can use them as needed. “Plants have growth spurts. If these periods don’t coincide with peak additions of fertilizer, a lot of nutrients released into the soil are not used by the plant. A fertilizer that slowly releases its nutrients thus creates less waste. We have a truly competitive product!” boasts Mr. Dion.

The formulas developed by Biopterre can work in all types of soil. They primarily contain organic materials, which is better for the environment.

“It’s all very well to say that we make fertilizer, but it also has to work well! Biopterre provided a lot of technical support and the results have been excellent,” notes Mr. Pepin. Very proud of their product, the Syndicat des producteurs ovins du Bas-Saint-Laurent will soon begin the commercialization process. □

